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## BROILER PROFITS DEPEND ON EFFICIENT FEED CONVERSION

Bureau of Animal Industry, Agricultural Research Administration  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Feed represents more than 60 percent of the total cost of producing broilers. A recent study of more than 100 lots of commercial broilers showed that each decrease of one pound of feed per pound of broiler resulted in a saving of almost 5 cents per pound. On a three-pound broiler the saving could amount to 15 cents---often more than the entire net profit.

This same study also showed a wide range of efficiency among different flocks. The best flocks required only 2.7 pounds of feed per pound of gain, whereas the poorest needed 6 pounds. Thus, the difference in producing a 3-pound broiler was about 50 cents in feed cost alone.

Broiler producers have been quick to adopt feeds and management practices that increase feed efficiency. In 1946, the study showed that an average of 4.7 pounds of feed was required for every pound of gain, but an average of only 3.9 pounds of feed was required in 1948-49. Even greater gains have been made with the addition of antibiotics and vitamin B<sub>12</sub> to growing rations.

### KNOW YOUR FEED

Most commercial broiler producers use a commercial broiler mash. For greatest efficiency, the mash must supply protein, vitamins, and essential mineral elements, together with essential amino acids at levels as near ideal as possible. The tag on the bag of feed does not tell the quantities of all these nutrients in the feed, but it provides some important information that the broiler producer can't afford to neglect.

The tag tells the kind of feed---"Broiler Mash". A feed labeled "Growing Mash" might be intended for pullets on good pasture and would be unsuitable for birds confined to a broiler house.

It tells the manufacturer's name. You have to rely on the integrity and ability of the manufacturer for the right formula, high quality ingredients, and adequate mixing.

It gives guaranteed minimum figures for protein and fat content and guaranteed maximum figures for fiber and ash. A broiler mash should be guaranteed to contain at least 20 percent of protein and not more than 5 percent of fiber.

It contains a list of ingredients. Among the ingredients of a broiler mash should be fish meal or fish solubles, and an antibiotic supplement. These

ingredients are extremely important from the standpoint of rapid growth. A vitamin B<sub>12</sub> supplement is desirable since its presence shows that the manufacturer has given attention to the necessity for supplying this vitamin economically and in abundance. Adequate vitamin B<sub>12</sub> can, however, be supplied by use of fish meal, fish solubles, and meat meal.

#### HIGH FEED INTAKE NECESSARY

Once you have a good mash, you must then be sure the birds eat as much of it as possible. High feed intake is necessary for rapid weight gain.

Mash should be kept before the birds all the time, and fresh mash should be added to the hoppers at least once a day. Scattering feed on sheets of paper or cardboard for day-old chicks often helps to increase early feed consumption. The paper or cardboard should be removed after 2 days as it becomes unsanitary.

Provide plenty of feeder space. During the first 2 weeks there should be for each 100 chicks, 5 feet of feeder that permits feeding from both sides. From the third through the eighth weeks, there should be 10 feet of feeder per 100 chicks, and after the eighth week, 15 feet. Feeders should be designed to prevent waste.

Good management must be practiced if feed is to be used efficiently. Good management includes prevention and control of disease. The chicken that eats and grows may be more or less efficient depending on heredity, the quality of the feed, and the environmental conditions; but the chicken that eats and dies can push the average feed efficiency only one way---down.

Here is a check list of things to do to increase efficiency of feed utilization by broilers:

- ✓ Feed a broiler mash
- ✓ Feed a broiler mash that is guaranteed to contain at least 20 percent protein and not more than 5 percent fiber.
- ✓ Feed a broiler mash that contains an antibiotic supplement and either fish meal or fish solubles.
- ✓ Supply feed to chicks as soon as possible after you get them from the hatchery.
- ✓ Be sure that feed is readily available all of the time. Scatter feed on paper or cardboard the first day or two. Provide enough feeder space.
- ✓ Use feeders that prevent waste.
- ✓ Add fresh feed to feeders at least once a day; more often if possible.





